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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

In entering upon a new volume it is proper that we should review our position and endeavor to state the central question more clearly. Not much good can be expected from reading what purports to be an answer to a question that no one has asked. The reader must have the question continually before him, if he would read the answer intelligently. It is very easy to illustrate this remark: let one read the commentators of Plato and he will find many of the dialogues pronounced incomplete, because they end negatively. The modern commentator asks questions that Plato did not entertain. In one sense they are incomplete, but so are all of the dialogues if judged by the same standard. The full treatment of a subject should have three stages:—(a) Immediateness, (b) mediation, (c) absolute mediation. More explicitly, it should be treated first in its most obvious phases, such, for example, as occur in the sensuous knowing. Then follows the treatment of the same object in its complication with other objects; its *relations, pre-suppositions, consequences*, &c. This is called the *reflective* stage, and our formal logic has carefully gathered up the “laws” that govern it. The final stage of an exhaustive scientific treatment traces the object back to itself, having grasped it as a totality. “Absolute Mediation” means *self-mediation*. Plato has not given us a single example of a systematic

combination of these three forms of treatment. The reason for this is found in the fact that the Grecian national culture had not advanced far into the reflective stage. A child of eight years in our time is more conscious of the abstract nature of the words he uses than the average adult Greek of Plato’s time. Therefore Plato does not unfold the second stage so fully as a modern would do. Sometimes, too, his dialogue has for object the production in the minds of his countrymen of just that consciousness of the distinctions of reflection which we possess from childhood. His questions therefore proceeded from his time; all speculation should be directed to the solution of the world before us. Plato solved the problem of his time, and we must take his questions with their limitations or else mistake the purport of his answers. He arrives at the highest goal, but his details are not full enough to satisfy us; he solves by his dialectic only such forms as had begun to appear in that time. The two thousand years that intervene have brought out a host of others which demand solution likewise. Other speculative writers—especially those of modern times—do not often attempt exhaustiveness. They aim to express their *aperçu* in the clearest mode; hence they state their starting point, (which is some conviction resting on a distinction of reflection,) and then proceed to elevate them-

selves above and beyond it to the speculative point of view. Mystics form an exception to this statement in that they do not always start from any standpoint of the ordinary consciousness.

The question must be seized precisely, and this is indispensable in proportion to the systematic exhaustiveness of the treatment.

In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* the first question is not "what is the absolutely true?" but it is the specific one, "is the object of my certitude true (permanent, abiding) without my subjective activity?" This question being settled in the negative the new question arises: "Is the object perfectly identified through my subjective testimony to its existence?" This question next becomes, "Is it possible at all for an object to exist as absolutely particular?" This gets answered in an exhaustive way. But how many have been misled to suppose that the first answer was intended to settle the general question. Even the acute Feuerbach stumbles over this and refutes Hegel by showing in a number of instances that the first stage of the method which Hegel so uniformly pursues, does not answer the question which should be answered by the *third* stage of treatment. Of course his labor is not remunerative; it does not pay the reviewer to refute a position of his author, which has been stated by the author himself merely for refutation. It is certainly not a discredit to an author, that he has treated a subject in all its phases—shallow as well as deep.

We invite the reader to note our fundamental position.

Truth can be known by the thinking reason. It has been known by speculative thinkers scattered through the ages. Their systems exist and may be mastered. Their differences are not radical, but lie rather in the mode of exposition—the point of departure, the various obstacles overcome, and the character of the *technique* used. Their agreement is central and pervading. The method of speculative cognition is to be distinguished from that of sensuous certitude, and from the reflection of the understanding by the exhaustive nature of its procedure. It considers its

subject in a universal manner and its steps are void of all arbitrariness.

In order to detect a speculative system ask the following questions of it: (1.) "Is the highest principle regarded as a fixed, abstract, and rigid one, or as a concrete and self-moving one?" (2.) "Is the starting point of the system regarded as the highest principle, and the onward movement of the same merely a result deduced analytically; or is the beginning treated as the most abstract and deficient, while the final result is the basis of all?" In other words, "Is the system a descent from a first principle or an ascent to one?" This will detect a defect of the method, while the former question, (1,) will detect defects in the content or subject matter of the system.

Attention should also be called to some special theses which we hope to establish clearly in the course of this volume.

I. In the present attitude of natural science the grade of thought is almost speculative. It has before it all the elements and only needs grasp them together. With the doctrine of the correlation of forces it has arrived at a self moving principle, although it does not yet comprehend (*com-prehendere*) it. If the force No. 1 creates force No. 2, and the latter, force No. 3—if these forces are one and the same force under different phases—and this result goes on to the force No. x which creates force No. 1 again, we certainly have a circular movement and a self-created force. Force No. 1 creates itself by means of a long chain of *media*—No. 2, No. 3, &c. When this is grasped by the "positivist" intellect it will enter the domain of biology and give us a complete science thereof.

II. In the domain of formal logic and metaphysics likewise a stage has been reached that approximates the speculative. The negative and dialectical stage is reached by the advanced thinkers of this domain. The labors of Hamilton have done as much for the English mind as those of Kant for the German. The ability to evolve antitheses ("antinomies" of Kant,) from any metaphysical principles is everywhere displayed. The dialectic is used to exhibit the impotency of the "human intellect"

which is hurled resistlessly from one side to the other. But antithesis is the soul of movement, and when grasped affirmatively gives us the self-determined or the true first principle. The cultivators of formal logic in their extreme care to detect the source of this negative element in the dialectic are at present engaged in seizing and measuring the comprehension and extension of the subject and predicate. Their labors up to present date have served only to narrow the function of the judgment more and more; it is evident, upon consideration, that the abstract identity of subject and predicate—in other words, a meaningless tautology—is all that can remain if formal logic will be *thoroughly* consistent and exclude all trace of contradiction (or, what is the same thing, *distinction*) from the judgment. This we shall endeavor to elaborate in Chapter IX. of the Introduction to Philosophy, printed in this number.

III. The adequacy of scientific forms to contain the contents of mystical systems.

We are fortunate in being able to present in this number another and more elaborate article from Mr. Alcott, the most eminent mystic of our time. We hope to present in a future number an exhibition of his system in its relation to Method. In this connection, also, the article of Dr. Tafel on Swedenborg will be studied with great interest.

IV. That Art and Religion have the same content as Speculative Philosophy. We shall print the remainder of the Essay of Bénard on Hegel's *Æsthetics*, and hope that readers who have the leisure will reread the whole from the beginning. The "Letters on Faust" we are happy to hear have been found a most comprehensive and clear exposition of that poem.

In conclusion, we hope that the "Phenomenology" will not be neglected, and that the "Sun-clear Statement" of Fichte will be taken up by those who have been completely baffled by the former articles translated from him.

SUN-CLEAR STATEMENT

To the Public at large concerning the true nature of the NEWEST PHILOSOPHY. An attempt to force the reader to an understanding.

Translated from the German of J. G. FICHTE, by A. E. KROEGER.

PREFACE:

Certain friends of transcendental idealism, or of the System of the Science of Knowledge, have attached to this system the name of the newest philosophy. Although this looks somewhat like a satire, and seems to presuppose in those who originated it a search after a *very newest* philosophy, and although the author of that system is clearly convinced that there is only one science of philosophy as there is only one science of mathematics; and that as soon as this only possible philosophy has been discovered and recognized no newer philosophy can arise, and all previous so-called philosophies will be regarded as only preliminary attempts to establish that science: he nevertheless has preferred the use of that expression in the title of a popular work like the present to the risk of using

such unpopular names as "Transcendental Idealism," or "The Science of Knowledge."

Many reasons make it necessary and proper to render an account to the public at large, which has not made the study of philosophy its particular business, concerning the latest attempts to raise philosophy to the dignity of a science. True, not all men are to devote their life to a study of the sciences, and hence not either to a study of the science of all other sciences—a scientific philosophy; and to cultivate this science successfully requires, moreover, a freedom of mind, an industry and a talent which can be found only in a few. Nevertheless it is equally true that every one who claims but an ordinary intellectual culture should know *what* this science of philosophy is; should know—though himself not joining in its investigations—what it proposes to investigate